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**CUSTOMERS' DELIGHT: DETECTING CUSTOMERS'  
ATTITUDE, CASE OF ESTONIAN HOTEL SPAS**

Master Thesis

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This Master thesis has been compiled independently. All works by other authors used while compiling the thesis as well as principles and data from literary and other sources have been referred to.

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## INTRODUCTION

As customer delight is becoming more and more, vital in service organizations, there is a need for the management of Spa Hotels to begin to pay more attention to the development of their products and to improve the quality of their services, to meet and exceed customer's expectations. Therefore the service provider should be able to detect what could be the expectation of the customer even over some time, before designing the product or service, to avoid service failure and match expectation with service delivery. The key aspect of marketing is an attitude of mind; it requires that the manager looks at the viewpoint of the customer before taking a decision (Palani & Sohrabi, 2013, p. 32).

If the experience gotten by the customer from a service outcome deviates from the customer's expectation, it will not only dissatisfy the customer, but it will aggravate them (Kozak & Gürel, 2015, p. 226). Consequently, the customer will be annoyed and may defect (Jones & Sasser, 1995, p. 89). But if the experiences are more than expected, the customer is pleased and delightful (Bell & Zemke, 1987). Our everyday lives are influenced by attitudes and affected in how people judge and react towards an object, events, and people (Palani & Sohrabi, 2013, p. 12). Satisfaction experience influence attitude change and purchase intentions (Oliver, 1980). It is generally agreed that satisfactions interact with other cognitions of emotional nature (Homans, 1961). For instance, the effective component of attitude relates to a person's emotions and determines how they feel about certain product or services, whether pleasant or unpleasant (Palani & Sohrabi, 2013, p. 15). Oliver (1980) asserted that attitude somehow captures the totality of expectation level and that it provides the baseline for other cognitions of an overall nature, particularly satisfaction.

So said, customer's expectation and perception will influence the customers attitude. Apart from cognitive evaluation and functionality aspects, customer's emotion plays a big role in product experience and service encounter (Hartono, Chuan, & Peacock, 2013, p. 257). Expectations are beliefs, probabilities of attribute occurrences (Olson & Dover, 1976). This assertion by Olson & Dover (1976) was recommended by Oliver (1980), who argued that consumer's retention to a particular service or service provider would depend on the extent to which the expectation of that consumer was met. When a service design does not meet the customer's requirement, then, that service creation is considered as a 'dumb innovation' (Kozak & Gürel, 2015, p. 226).

Customers delight is considered as an essential attribute for shaping positive consumers attitude. Several theories have been developed by scholars for measuring customer satisfaction and delight. Some of these theories include SERVQUAL model, the performance only model (SERVPERF), the gap model, attractive service quality model, (Agarwal & Kumar, 2016), Need-based Model, the Kano amongst others. Schneider & Bowen (1999), argued that firms are supposed to go far beyond satisfying customers' expectations, but the need to exceed people's needs. Surprisingly, a little performance and innovation may lead to a significant effect on customer delight (Hartono, Chuan, & Peacock, 2013, p. 258). Most scholars have equally agreed on the emotional effects of meeting and exceeding customer's needs and expectations. For example, Palani & Sohrabi (2013, p. 16) asserted that the effective component of attitude relates to a person's emotions, thus you need to know people and their needs in order to be able to change their attitude towards something or provide a satisfactory experience to them. It's worth noting that the aforementioned theories have been developed to aid organizational management to meet and exceed customers' expectations, to secure a loyal customer base for firms.

Customer's attitude and expectations change over time. If the organization is unable to realize this attitude change of what customers expect at a particular time, then, they will provide wrong services to customers. In such a case, the customer will not be satisfied talk less of being delighted and the loser will be the firm; as it is noted that customer's satisfaction creates loyalty without conviction (Tran, Roswinanto, Yunus, & Kurnia, 2016). Loyalty leads to a firm's profitability as loyal customers will turn to purchase

more (Dowling & Uncles, 1997). Loyalty is said to be a key component for customers delight. Thus firms will want to delight their customers and make a profit. But unfortunately, firms fail many times to satisfy and delight their customers, despite all efforts. Most times, this service failure occurs due to lack of understanding by the firm of what the customer expects, obvious service gap by the SERVQUAL (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990). The customer's perception must be eminent when designing service (Kozak & Gürel, 2015). Therefore, the service provider should be able to detect what could be the expectation of the customer even over a period of time before designing the product or providing the service, so as to avoid service failure and match expectations with service delivery.

However most of the service quality models that have been articulated by aforementioned authors including the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory of Oliver, Rust and Varki (1997), and all the above mentioned theories including the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), do not account for how the customer's perception and attitude evolves over time, when the customer continues using the product or repeat the service. None of the articles portrayed above and read for the writing of this thesis have been able to identify the need to detect customers' attitude before service provision to avoid service failure and none as well has been able to suggest methods or ways that could be used by managers that will enable them to detect attitude change of the customers over time; this causes lots of service failures in services organizations because the management may remain dormant to notice the customers' change of attitude at a particular moment in time. For instance, Tsiotsou & Wirtz (2015, p. 117) assumes that service firms nowadays embark on soft factors like giving surprise birthday cakes to delight customers, which may, later on, fail to be delightful maybe because, this delighting tool has become a basic requirement, in the mind of the customer. Thus the firm has to be alert to know when items need to be changed, if not, the effort of wanting to sustain the objective of customer delight in the organization would be frustrating. This Thesis is purposed to pull the attention of managers, towards the fact that customers attitude changes over time so do their expectations.

Therefore, the goal of the thesis is to analyze the customer's delight and satisfaction, then, according to the result, present suggestions, to Estonian Spa managers for designing new services.

Research questions are:

1. How do managers change items to exceed customers' expectations and create delight?
2. How aware are managers about customers' delight?

The tasks for writing this thesis, therefore, are as follows;

1. To give a literature review about the need and ways to detect customers' attitude and expectations before service delivery for customers' delight.
2. To design and conduct the research in Estonian hotel Spas, using the Kano model in order to analyze the customer delight.
3. To analyze the results and give suggestions and recommendations to Spa managers for designing new services.

The Kano model has been chosen as ideal for this paper because customers satisfaction level can be measured prior to and after service delivery, and also, The Kano questionnaire probes both the customer's voice and the customer's mind, it explores the potential user or the customer's psychology (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016).

This master's thesis has been divided into two chapters as follows. After the introduction, chapter one commenced with an overview of hotel Spas. Followed by a review on customers' attitudes, and proceeded with a comprehensive literature review on customers' delight, base on the components, perspectives, approaches and critics. Thereafter, the Kano model for customer's satisfaction, customer delight and advantages is discussed and a reasonable comparison between the Kano model and other theories of customer satisfaction is made. Chapter one ends up by revealing some integrative ways and reasons for detecting customer's attitude for customers' delight. Chapter two, expounded on the study amongst hotel spa managers, staffs and customers. This started with a description of Estonian hotel spas, research method, then data collection and results, after which there is a discussion and recommendation that led to a conclusion.

# **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **1.1. Overview of Hotel Spas**

Hotels and spa hotels are generally set to welcome guest from different cultures. The overall objectives of the hotel spa are to offer accommodation and professional spa services also, such as massages, fitness and wellness components, breakfast among others. Of course, guest visits hotel spas for several reasons, including relaxation they need the staffs to take care of their needs, some look for exceptional friendliness in hotel spas, professionalism of staff; customers wish to go out of daily routine calls (Torres & Kline, 2013). Generally, people as human wants to feel good and this is the primary reason why most people live their homes to spend a day or days in the spa. of course if all humans can just make feeling better their goal, then, a lot of extra work will be eliminated (Smith & Puczko, 2014). Going to spa Hotels is a sort of problem-solving tool for some guest, to stay away from home, refresh their minds and relax in a spa hotel.

Most people who visit hotel spas are tourist; research also found out that 43% of those who visit spas and wellness facilities include tourists do so for health purposes, constituting the core consumers in such instances (Smith & Puczko, 2015). It is a constant habit for hoteliers striving to provide excellent service to all of those who visit the hotels and spa Hotels (Torres, Fu, & Lehto, 2014a). Some scholars are of the opinion that, male and female visits the spa hotels for different reasons. For example though a universal set of criteria will tend to delight guest, a more specific set of criteria will tend to delight guest of other gender (Torres, Fu, & Lehto, 2014b). These writers held that while aspects like friendliness and professionalism will delight female guests at the spa hotel, male guest at the same spa hotel may be delighted by having their needs met by efficient and timely



service and by the availability of complementary amenities or upgrades. Therefore for spa hotel organization to be able to satisfy customers and exceed their expectation, they must be able to put in place mechanisms that can enable them to detect what could be pleasurable amongst different guest. Talking on the same line of the heterogeneous nature of perceived service value by guest, Tsai, Suh, & Wung (2012), suggested five performance factors derived for managers of spa Hotels to pay close attention to, this include: environment, reliability, service experience, value and augmented service quality. Where they stressed that, environmental factors are the most common factors that may significantly influence male Hotel spa goers. These writers argued that, if managers take these aspects into consideration, then they will have delighted guest who will spread positive word of mouth, beneficial to the firm.

Competitors in the hotel business need to go beyond what is expected in order to satisfy the guest with an unpredictable positive experience as all understands that delighted customers are those whose expectations has been exceeded by the service provider (Elias-Almeida, Miranda, & Almeida, 2016). The writers stressed the essentiality to understand perceived service quality characteristics that can delight and build loyal relationships with customers of hotels. They further postulated that spa tourism has become extremely critical; this could be seen in several parts of the world and has of no doubt become an integral part of the overall tourist experience for a tourist destination. Consequently, to create a feeling of complete satisfaction, there is need for managers of spa Hotels to understand customers' demands and expectations, and their subsequent evaluation (Elias-Almeida, Miranda, & Almeida, 2016). Hotel spa managers need to enhance delighting strategies so as to enhance customers' loyalty, which is of the utmost importance given the competitive nature of the hospitality sector. The increasing expansion of spa hotels into other hospitality and related areas amplifies the continuing importance of guest loyalty and the need to ensure guests repeated reservations at a perceived favorite spa hotel (Jani & Han, 2014).

According to (Butori & De Bruyn, 2013), management or managers sometimes have misconception about the expectation of their customers, most especially, they fail to

consider the heterogeneity of human nature and instead, they generalize customers expectation. Though most advocates of service recovery system believed that a proper service recovery delivered will make a customer to be more loyal than if the customer was never hurt before, some have argued that excellent service recovery from a failed service may only change the intent of the customer and change the image of the service provider to the customer, but may not cause them to come back to that particular service provider for repurchasing (Andreassen, 2001).

## **1.2. Customers' attitude**

Attitude is considered as a certain way of thinking or belief on something. Attitude can be based on different types of psychological information's or components such as emotions and beliefs (Maio, Esses, & Bell, 2000). According to Palani & Sohrabi, (2013, p. 13), attitudes are learned through past experience and serves as a link between thoughts and behavior. Persuasion plays an important role in everyday social life and the most common target of persuasion is person's attitude. Attitude refers to the general evaluation individuals have regarding, business, services, people objects or issues; Attitude can be assessed in many ways and are accorded special statues because of their presume influence on peoples choices and actions (Petty & Briñol, 2010). According to Petty and Briñol (2010), attitude change for example, mediates the impact of belief change on behavior change. Consumer's attitude towards a product or service changes over time, some customers could be extreme loyalist to a firm or brand, while others could be ambivalent such that anything could cause them to change their attitude towards a perceived service and change the firm (Schneider & Bowen, 1999). Schneider & Bowen (1999), considers consumers attitudes from the point of their emotions. They held that, people's wants are lesser than their needs; thus organizations should focus on exceeding the expectations of customers' needs as humans, rather than just satisfying their wants as consumers. These authors are of the opinion that there will be a better understanding of the dynamics of customer emotions and their effect on customer behavior and loyalty if the firm focuses more on emotional aspect than satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Such attitude involves actively deciding to purchase exclusively from one firm and offering word of mouth publicity to get other clients for that particular firm, which is unsolicited advocacy of a service business. Most consumers range from

being moderately dissatisfied to moderately satisfied, it can be inferred that such a state of moderation means customers are essentially ambivalent in their loyalty to a particular brand of business or firm (Schneider & Bowen, 1999, p. 36). According to these scholars, the customers would likely defect or change firm in the presence of even a modest motivation from another firm, which could be either by getting a better price, finding a more convenient store location, or simply trying a new merchant. While a little provision of unexpected needs might produce delight (Hartono, Chuan, & Peacock, 2013, p. 258).

The research by Schneider and Bowen (1999) is in line with the idea that was later on postulated by Maio et al., (2000). They asserted that, ambivalence and inconsistency are distinct and are empirically unrelated and has effect on messages and processing. People are said to be ambivalent when they seem to be double minded towards something, an attribute or object; they harbor conflicting opinion, and remain both positive and negative (Maio, Esses, & Bell, 2000). This idea which Maio et al., (2000) elaborated on here had earlier been postulated by Kaplan (1972). In initial sales techniques, one could either predict a customer to be negative, positive, or passive consumers, where the passive type could easily be changed from a neutral standpoint to positive. But this traditional idea however is said to be conflicting "to some extent, the notion of ambivalence is counter-intuitive because it contradicts the traditional notion that attitudes are either positive or negative" (Maio, Esses, & Bell, 2000). Moreover, Petty and Briñol (2010), though shared some similarities with authors who believe that attitude could only be either positive or negative; they however differ to a greater extent by buttressing that, in order to have a better understanding of attitude, consideration must be made from the stand point of implicit and explicit attitudes. Implicit measures do not always reveal the same result as explicit self-report someone, maybe considered as a hater of alcohol from an explicit standpoint of judgment; meanwhile an implicit evaluation on the other hand portrays favorable reaction, e.g. stronger association with alcohol, including more positive words than negative words (Petty & Briñol, 2010). Understanding customers' attitude can actually aid management to be able to predict changes and make amends quite on time.

This thesis is so relevant in the service and business world in general because as service is intangible, so too is human behavior, customers attitude can change unexpectedly. Attitude related information are messages, arguments, counter argument, favorable thoughts etc., the ability of attitude to cause positive behavior is rarely positive, thus the need to enhance the use of attitude measurement and models in applied settings (Cialdini, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1981).

The notion of attitude uncertainty has further assertions from Schneider & Bowen (1999, p. 35), who said that some consumers can change from one firm even if they feel satisfy. Satisfying customers is not enough to retain them because even satisfied customers defect at a high rate in many industries. According to Schneider & Bowen (1999), a firm must endeavor to secure one hundred percent total customer satisfaction and delight, to obtain the type of loyalty they desire. "Service businesses can retain customers and achieve profitability by building reciprocal relationships founded on safe guarding and affirming customer security, fairness and self-esteem (Schneider & Bowen, 1999, p. 35). Thus, the latter are of the opinion that much focus should be on emotions, so as to be able to understand customer's attitude, behavior and loyalty. The writers however held that the best way to manage security and justice is to avoid violating them; violation of these needs will lead to outrage (Schneider & Bowen, 1999).

Satisfaction experience influences future purchase intention as well as post purchase attitude (Oliver, 1980). Customers are usually driven by their expectations towards a service or product. They become so dissatisfied if their expectations are not met, which Oliver (1980), considers as negative disconfirmation. While positive disconfirmation is preferable because the customers experience surpasses the expectation. When the experience surpasses the expectation, the customer is delighted. Online reviews like trip advisor has been considered as an important platform for consumers to share their purchase experiences, these online reviews has contributed a lot in determine customer's attitudes Lee & Ro (2016), since people have the opportunity and ability to post positive and negative consumption related experiences and evaluation for any interested party to see (Sparks & Browning, 2011, p. 4). Customers determine a service quality, perceived value and satisfaction by the comments and experience by others on

trip advisor and other medias because they believe other consumers even more than what the organization may say which they considers as mere publicity (Lee & Ro, 2016).

In a nutshell, customers attitudes may change from any information or message they get towards a service or service provider. Attitude change means that an individual's evaluation is modified from one value to another and the change is usually assessed relatively to the individual's original attitude (Lee & Ro, 2016). Lee & Ro (2016), were simply in agreement with Petty and Briñol (2010), Therefore, organizations must be conscious of the fact that customers attitude towards a particular service or products definitely changes over time, and should able to unravel strategies to detect this change of attitude on time, for quality service delivery and customer delight.

### **1.3. Customers' delight; components, approaches, critics and perspectives**

Customer delight is trendy and vital nowadays in service businesses. It is a pleasant word to hear and it's becoming more pleasurable for managers to delight their customers. Several writers have postulated definitions for customers delight. For instance, Customer delight is seen as a situation when the experience surpasses satisfaction and involves a pleasurable experience for the guest (Torres, Fu, & Lehto, 2014a). According to Oliver et al, (1997), many business practitioners have addressed the importance of delighting the customer as an extension of providing basic satisfaction. During service encounter and product experience, customer delight is positively linearly correlated with the performance of product and services (Hartono, Chuan, & Peacock, 2013, p. 258). Customer delight can be seen as an unexpected high level of satisfaction from performance which initiates an arousal which is pleasure and has a positive effect, resulting to the delight sequence; making it a combine result of pleasure and arousal Oliver et al., (1997). In like manner, customers' delight requires that customers receive a mixture of joy with positive surprise, which is beyond their expectations (Berman, 2005). The view of delight as an arousal has been adopted by other writers. For instance, Ma, Jun, Scott, & Ding, (2013), saw delight as an emotion related to hedonic consumption and characterized as an arousal, positive effect. Most

researchers have a similar view with Oliver et al., (1997), seeing delight as a mixture of joy and surprise (Kumar, Olshavsky, & King, 2001). But some writers however differed in one way, for example: components of delight involve magic joy and real joy (Ma, Jun, Scott, & Ding, 2013).

Kumar et al., (2001), though in support of the fact that delight is a combination of joy and surprise, further argued that there are two types of delights. One with surprise and one without surprise, they asserted that a subject could feel delighted even without being surprise.

Most researchers of service management are of the opinion that industries must strive to satisfy customers in order to ensure a loyal customers base for their firm. However some scholars found out that satisfied customers were not necessarily loyal customers (Reichheld, 1994). Satisfying customers is not enough to retain them, because even satisfied customers defect (Schneider & Bowen, 1999, p. 35). Schneider and Bowen (1999) rated customers in to "merely satisfied", satisfied and totally satisfied. The customers who are completely satisfied are likely to be loyal than customers who are just satisfied; the completely satisfied customers has been labeled as delighted customers (Kumar, Olshavsky, & King, 2001). According to these writers therefore, delighting customers has been suggested as a way to increase customer's loyalty towards a firm.

However, not all researchers think that the notion of delight by constantly creating surprise is something to reckon with. Some, e.g., Rust and Oliver (2000) argued that the notion of delight may be detrimental to a company in a long run. They for instance, asserted that delighting the customer heightens the customer's expectation over again, making it more difficult to satisfy the customer in the next purchase circle and hurting the firm in a long run (Rust & Oliver, 2000). Supporting critics of the negative aspects of delights postulated that for, firms that have constant operations or business transactions with their customers, the cost of surprising them at every instance of the business transaction is not applicable and therefore it's forbidden (Kumar, Olshavsky, & King, 2001). Kumar et al., (2001), further argued that delighting by surprise is prohibitive because customers may raise expectations on the firm's performance and if the firm do not raise the bar themselves, then the competition will raise the bar by

improving performance and may take away the firm's customers. Arguing on the fact that it is even difficult to please people in this real world, some researchers believed that the investment required to change customers from satisfied to completely satisfied which is delight, will not even provide any financial return to the company and this is therefore a poor use of companies resources (Jones & Sasser, 1995, p. 89). More on critics, Rust and Oliver (2000), argued that the customer may even forget a delighting incident. If a customer forgets delighting incident to some degree, from time to time, the delighting firm suffers if its objective was to take customers from competition (Rust & Oliver, 2000). They however added that the delighting firm may benefit on the other hand by repeating a delighting act if taking customers from the competition is difficult. Further critic of customer delight asserted by writers suggested that perceived value, trust and satisfaction have greater impact on behavioral outcomes than customer delight (Correia Loureiro, Miranda, & Breazeale, 2014). They made their findings from a grocery shop where they suggested that retailers should focus on the more mundane factors that influence consumers' perception of value and trust, rather than trying to invest in the substantial resources, required to continually delight customers. Hence while delight is applauded by others, as a perfect means to ensure customers loyalty, retention and repurchase intent, some others, sees it as an unnecessary act which only results to, over expenditure, a waste of resources and unnecessary stress on the side of the delighting firm.

Notwithstanding, it is believed that the efforts by firms to delight customers can only be detrimental if there is service failure or if what is purposed to delight the customer fails to be delightful to the customer. Berman (2005), held that the opposite of delight is not dissatisfaction it is outraged. The essential thing to do, to obtain proper service quality, is to achieve or to go beyond what the customers expect for the service (Ziethaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990). These researchers advocated for full-Service quality in the quest for satisfying customers' expectation for the service. They developed the theory of customer Satisfaction known as SERVQUAL (service quality) model. While Berman (2005) and Schneider & Bowen (1999) are at the extreme parallel edge of delight, by postulating that a customer is either delighted or outrageous, much can be done to avoid this outrageous attitude of consumers. Customers would like to receive what they have been promised by the firm, failure to do so will result to service failure,

disappointment, victimization and outrage (Schneider & Bowen, 1999). Customers who experience service failure become annoyed and victimized (Bell & Zemke, 1987). Several qualities have been proposed and added by writer to ensure service quality that could delight customers.

Schneider and Bowen (1999), suggested that customers should be considered first as human with basic needs and later, consumers with wants, and firms should ensure one hundred percent customer satisfaction which will consequently delight customers. They suggested that justice, security and self-esteem are vital tool for customer's satisfaction and delight. Moreover, Parasuraman et al., (1985), believed that quality service to customers can be offered only if there is trust, credibility, reliability, assurance, integrity and much more, on the part of the firm, for ensuring customers loyalty. They buttressed further that customers would like to perceive what they were promised by the firm and this will avoid outrage, Berman (2005), holds similar view. The best way for firms to implement justice and delight customers is to avoid injustice. Once a company violates trust, it is difficult to change the resulting outrage to satisfaction, much less delight (Schneider & Bowen, 1999, p. 41). And outrageous customers, due to too much annoyance will become "terrorist" and may go about spreading negative word of mouth communication (Schneider & Bowen, 1999). This is confirmed by Berman (2005, p. 132) who stated that outrage may lead to revenge. Outrage is a combination of surprise and anger, as well as delight is a combination of joy and surprise (Berman, 2005, p. 133).

Contrarily others for example Andreassen (2001), believes that excellent service recovery after a failed service is the best thing that can bring delight. According to these advocates, service failure tends to make customers more loyal to a firm than if there was never a service failure. Some of those who believe in excellent service recovery for customers delight like Andreassen (2001), are of the opinion that there must always be service failure. For example, service failure will inevitably occur due to resource constraints and reasons to service failure could be consistently inconsistent for each encounter (Torres, Fu, & Lehto, 2014a.). This school of thought also holds that service recovery has a positive impact on customer's future intent, perception and attitude. A good service recovery can turn an angry and frustrated customer to a loyal one



(Andreassen, 2001, p. 3). Andreassen (2001) however held that excellent service recovery can only change the intent and image of the consumer, but can never bring them back to that highest level of satisfaction which is delight. Moreover, supporting service quality influence repurchase intentions by affecting consumer delight rather than satisfaction (Xuehua, 2011). The strongest recovery effect is generally observed when compensation represent a resource similar to the failure it is supposed to offset, which could be an immediate monetary compensation (Roschk & Gelbrich, 2014). However it could be possible to make amends when there is service failure if there is some degree of relationship between the firm and the customer this may depend on the bond of relationship between the service provider and the customer, and according to Veronica et al., the strength of relationship is affected both by the degree of commitment between the both (Liljander & Strandvik, 1995).

Of course, several contradicting views emerged, especially recently as to what can really delight customers. Some saw it based on organizational setting; organizational culture can enhance customers delight (Kao, Tsaur, & Wu, 2016). Managers should be aware of the effect of organizational culture on performance, national culture of employees, influence balance organizational culture, and in turn influences performance (Nazarian, Atkinson, & Faroudi, 2017). Some writers saw delight from the perspective of gender differences, for example, men and women can potentially be delighted by different aspects of service experience (Torres, Fu, & Lehto, 2014b,). Researchers found out that female guest where more likely to be delighted by friendliness and professionalism; while male tourists appeared to be delighted more likely by having their needs met by efficiency and timely service (Torres, Fu, & Lehto, 2014b). On the same line of gender differences, Tsai, Suh and Wong (2012), based their research on understanding male hotel Spa goers in Hong Kong. They found out that the reason why most Spa goers could patronize a Hotel Spa is for relaxation and the most consumed service by men was body massage. So based on their research, they further suggested five performance factors for managers to pay attention to if they must delight male gender. These factors are: environment, reliability, service experience, value and augmented service quality.

Other perspectives on what might delight customers came from those who saw it from the angle of customer relationship management. Relationship is when a customer has purchased from the same service provider at least twice (Liljander & Strandvik, 1995). A writer suggested that, customers and employees should be linked for customer delight, probably the Ritz-Carlton Hotels and resort are using this principle; the luxury hotel is so successful in customer delight (Berman, 2005). Writing on the same line, the Li and Hsu (2016), suggested that, employee's innovative behavior lays the foundation of organizational innovation and are of immense importance to business success. They further emphasized that higher level of customers employee's relationship leads to higher perceived social psychological climate for innovation, hence, leading to customer delight as innovation comes with surprises. On a similar perspective, Saarijärvi, Karjaluoto and Kuusela (2013), suggested the extension of customers' relationship management from empowering firms to empowering customers. These writers suggested that customers should be empowered to ensure delight. A fundamental change in customer relationship management thinking is needed to shift the focus from empowering firm to empowering customers (Saarijärvi, Karjaluoto, & Kuusela, 2013). More to this, Employees engagement has been considered to be influential in delighting customers; fully engaged, absorbed and dedicated employees are confident and positive at work place, this keeps not only the employee happy, but also the customers (Shaheen, Zeba, & Mohanty, 2018). To further buttress this point, they postulated that "work engagement is found to predict psychological capital of the employees and customers delight" Shaheen et al., (2018). Thus according to them, engaged employees leads to employees' positive psychological capital and customer delight.

Conclusively, customers' delight which is considered as an extension of satisfaction and being a mixture of surprise and joy by Oliver (1980) has been considerate from different perspectives by different authors as to what result to it and others even considered it as a mixed blessings.

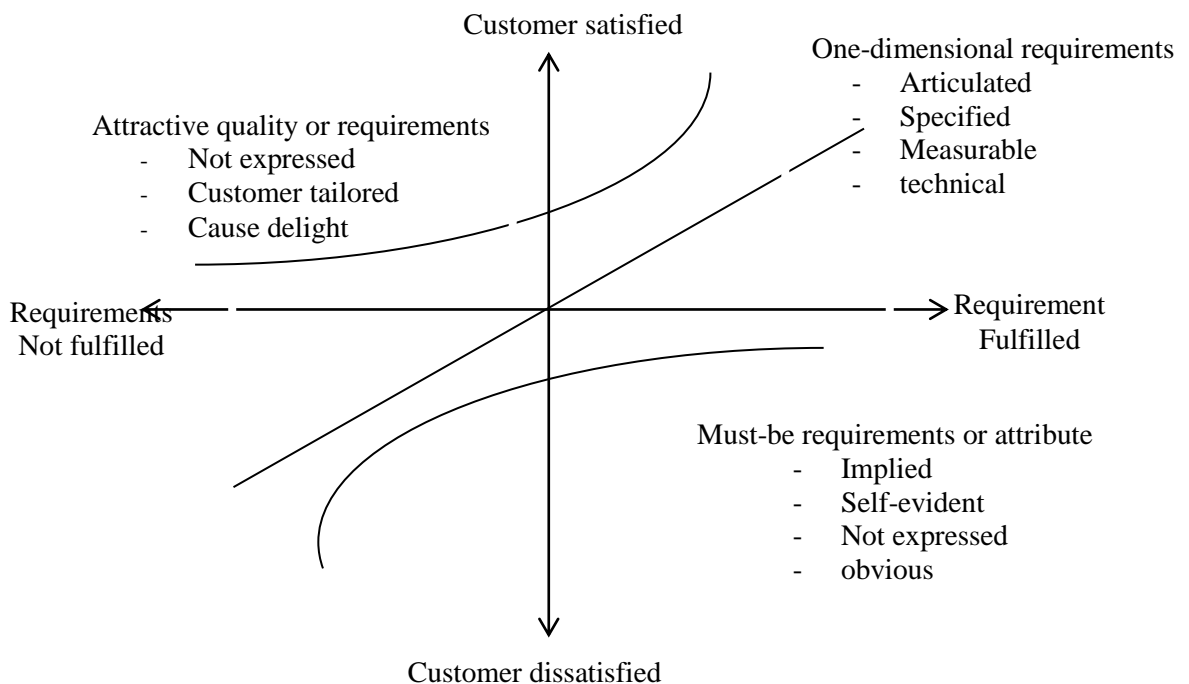
#### **1.4. The Kano model for customer delight and advantages**

The Kano model was developing in 1984 by Professor Noriaki Kano. It is a theory of product development and customer satisfaction. The Kano model, classifies product

requirement into three main attributes or qualities; this includes One-dimensional quality, Must-Be and attractive attributes (Matzler, Hinterhuber, Bailom, & Sauerwein, 1996). These attributes or qualities have the potential to elicit customer's satisfaction at different levels. The Kano model has become so popular amongst marketing managers since its creation in 1984; this popularity stemmed from the fact that, the Kano model differs itself from the strictly linear view of attribute performance for customer Satisfaction, and identifies these three qualities, Attractive, must-be and one-dimensional requirements (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2011). The classification of product requirement by Kano model into three dimensions has been expounded by many authors such as Mkpojiogu & Hashim (2016); Matzler & Hinterhuber (1998). Classifying product requirements into must-be requirements or basic attribute, one-dimensional attributes or satisfiers and attractive attributes or excitors can be used to focus on priorities for product development (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998, p. 30). Furthermore, an understanding of these product quality attributes is beneficial to improving the quality of products and in the improvement of services for hotels spas. Companies are determined to get their customers satisfied and delighted because this leads to profitability for the organization, as the company will lose the advantage and backing if customers are dissatisfied (Rust & Oliver, 2000).

The classification of the Kano model into must-Be, attractive and one dimensional attributes reveals that -must be attributes are the basics for every organization. Must be attributes are things that must be there for an organization to function. The provision of the must-be qualities has nothing to do with the customers satisfaction, because it doesn't influence satisfaction in anyway. The customer is not satisfied if this attribute is there. But the non-fulfillment or absence of this attribute creates serious discontent; the customer becomes very dissatisfied and may not be interested anymore in the product or service (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016). They added that the must be requirement though might not be expressed or demanded by the customers who believe that it is obvious for this attribute to be there, it is very competitive and can highly determine the success of a firm. An example of a must-be attribute in a spa hotel can be a very clean room and a sauna.

Moreover, Matzler et al., (1996), are of similar view that due to the Kano model analysis of the fact that, the one-dimensional quality has only one option, it is either this option is fulfilled to get the customer satisfied or it is not fulfilled to get the customer dissatisfied and outrageous. One dimensional attributes are well articulated, well specified, measurable and very technical (Matzler, Hinterhuber, Bailom, & Sauerwein, 1996). Thus, the level of satisfaction for one-dimensional attribute will be high depending on the level of fulfillment and vice versa. Moreover, according to Matzler et al., (1996), the must be attribute of the Kano model is usually self-implied, self-evident, not expressed and obvious. While the one dimensional requirements are usually articulated, specified, measurable and technical. And attractive requirements are not expressed, customer tailored and it causes delight as illustrated in figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** Kano diagram, classification of attributes. Source: Matzler, et al., 1996, p. 2

Lastly, the Attractive quality postulated by Kano in the 1984 Kano models explains that attractive quality is usually not expected or expressed by customers. Fulfilling this quality brings delight to the customer. However not achieving them, does not lead to customer's dissatisfaction (Matzler et al., 1998; Elma et al., 1996). The reverse attribute is one that will instead turn to dissatisfy the customer when provided, and the customer will be satisfied if the attribute is not there (Shyu, Chang, & Ko, 2013). Example of

these attributes maybe multiple colors in a single spa treatment room. While, the indifferent requirement is the one that when fulfilled or not fulfilled can neither satisfy nor dissatisfy a customer; thus, sometimes its provision will be curtailed for cost-saving purposes and reinvested in creating new delighters as times goes on.

The advantages of classifying product requirements with the use of the Kano model are worth outlining; Classifying product or attributes into must-be, quality, one-dimensional quality and attractive qualities can be used to focus on the priorities for product development (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998, p. 30). They are of the opinion that, it is unnecessary for organizations to waste many resources in trying to improve must be quality. they prefer that the funds should be directed to the one dimensional and attract attributes that have a more significant influence on perceived quality, value and have the potential to satisfy and delight the customer highly, respectively, Elma et al., (1996), are also advocates of this opinion.

It is advantageous to classify product by the use of the Kano model because, the Kano model enables marketers to see the source of satisfaction and delight and to differentiate these from must-haves (Berman, 2005, p. 132). He adds that the Kano model assumes that a firm could achieve a long-term competitive advantage only by providing delightful experiences to customers, and which will make it difficult for it key competitors to match with it.

The use of the Kano model enables the filtering out of those requirements that will not satisfy the customer's needs or that possess no value to the customer. Hence, enhancing the quality of the requirements and provides the best opportunity to choose which feature/requirement to retain and which to discard in a hotel spa. Thus, the Kano model helps to extract from users what they expect from a product (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016).

The Kano method is particularly useful in the design stage of a production /service because it facilitates categorization of both existing and non-existing product/service attributes according to their potential satisfaction delight and dissatisfaction/frustration (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2011, p. 61). Moreover, Kano's method provides valuable help in trade-off situations in the product development stage. If two product requirements

cannot be met simultaneously due to technical or financial reasons, the criterion can be identified which has the most significant influence on customer satisfaction (Matzler, et al., 1996).

To sum up, the classification of product requirement by the Kano model unravels the right product or service that can be used to obtain a high level of customer's satisfaction. It identifies which product or service can delight customers or gain a high level of customer's satisfaction (Matzler, et al., 1996). This has been classified into one-dimensional, must-be and attractive attributes, not living out the indifferent and the reverse qualities. The advantages of classifying product requirements with the use of the Kano model are enormous and cannot be overemphasized.

### **1.5. The Kano model in comparison with other theories of customer's satisfaction**

Several theories of customers' satisfaction emerged among which includes the Expectation disconfirmation theory of Oliver, (1997), and the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al., (1985; 1990). Some scholars have argued that some of these methods of customer's satisfaction are linear in the sense that they can measure only satisfaction and dissatisfaction. But the Kano model can also see excitors. Most of the other theories measures satisfaction only after service delivery, but the Kano model can be used to measure the customer's level of satisfaction prior to and after service delivery (Mikulic et al., 2011; Mkpojiogu & Hashim 2016; Berman, 2005).

According to the expectation, disconfirmation theory, satisfaction is a measure of the level of interaction between consumers pre-purchase expectation and after or post-purchase evaluation on the outcome of the service; where if expectation is exceeded, then there is positive disconfirmation, but if expectation is unfulfilled, then there is negative disconfirmation (Oliver, 1977). It is said to be confirmation, if the expectation matches the perception. According to Oliver (1997), Satisfaction results from positive disconfirmation and negative disconfirmation is said to result in dissatisfaction.

Parasuraman et al., (1985), in the SERVQUAL, identifies and expounded on the gap between expectation, perception and service delivery. An example can be seen in

Parasuraman et al., (1985). Where, they used a comparison between the customer's perceived value with their expectations, based on five dimensions', which includes reliability, tangibility, and empathy, responsiveness, and assurance service quality. (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016) drew inspiration from Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985). These excellent qualities, when perceived by the customers could differentiate an organization from others. Value is the customers overall assessment of the utility of the product or service, based on the perception of what is received and what is given. They further stressed that the judgment of high and low service quality depends on how customers perceived the actual service performance, in the context of what they expected. Hence, according to this model, service quality as perceived by the customer is the extent of discrepancy between the customers' expectations or their desires and their perceptions. (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990).

However as noted earlier, some critics, who are advocates of the Kano model for customer's satisfaction, emerged in opposition to the SERVQUAL and other models mentioned above of Customer Satisfaction. For example, as opposed to the expectation, disconfirmation theory of Oliver (1980), that sees satisfaction only as a form of the interrelation between the pre-purchase expectation of consumer and the post-purchase evaluation on the service outcome, the Kano model captures product and service satisfaction from different angles (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016). These writers also believe that the model by Parasuraman et al., (1985) has only one angle to judge satisfaction. While consumers see the judgment only on one angle or a linear scale; the Kano model, on the other hand, captures how customer feels if a proposed feature or attribute is in a product or service and also how they feel if that particular feature is not there; thus, two different angles shows two different results (Matzler et al., 1996). In like manner, as opposed to the other theories of customer's satisfaction, the Kano Model shows the extent of customer's satisfaction or dissatisfaction when requirements are met or fulfilled and when the requirements are unmet or unfulfilled (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016).

Moreover, Berman, (2005), argues that the popularity of the SERVQUAL, a model that argues that satisfaction is based on the Customers' assessment of what service were expected versus what a customer perceives he or she received may cause a lot of

confusion between what is known as customers delight and customers satisfaction. He adds that this is especially with the assumption of a Linear among satisfaction, dissatisfaction and delight (Berman, 2005). Furthermore, Satisfaction is more cognitive while delight is more effective Berman, (2005). Also, while satisfaction is based on perception, delight is emotional. Kano model however, can avoid this confusion; due to the different attribute components involved.

Furthermore, while SERVQUAL assumes a linear relation between customers' satisfactions and attribute performance, Kano model assumes that the relationship depends on whether the attribute is considered to be a Must-Be quality, a satisfier or an attractive attribute by the consumer (Berman, 2005, p. 132). In order to determine which Kano category a particular service item falls under, the Kano questionnaire is used, a subject is faced with either of the following two questions, whether there is the provision of the service attribute or whether there is an absence of the service attribute (Hartono, Chuan, & Peacock, 2013, p. 258).

Moreover, The Kano model has the potential to fulfill unspoken and latent needs known as the attractive quality, which is, the satisfaction that might lead to delight (Hartono et al., 2013, p. 258).

To sum it up the Kano model of customer's satisfaction retains advantages over the other models of measuring customers' satisfaction because, firstly, it does not require customers to have had experience with the product/service attribute that is being classified (Mikulić & Prebežac, 2011, p. 51). While in contrast, the other methods and approaches of customer's satisfaction, e.g. SERVQUAL, require, the outcome, to know the value and priorities for product/services development.

## **1.6. Reasons and ways of detecting customers' attitude for customers' delight**

As competition becomes intense amongst strategic groups, it is the desire of all managers especially hotel spa managers to meet and exceed the needs of their customers, every hotelier strive to provide excellent service to those who visit the spa hotel (Torres, Fu, & Lehto, 2014 a.). Especially when taking certain things into



consideration, for example the fact said that, customer satisfaction creates customer loyalty without conviction (Wolter, Bock, Smith, & Cronin, 2017). And reckoning with the fact that customer loyalty is a key component of customer delight, it is based on these that managers need to understand, discover and unravel the expectations of their customers so as to enable a better service or product design that will meet, exceed the needs of their customers and delight them.

Also the attitude of the customer should be detected for excellent service provision because, due to a consumer's experience with a product or service, he or she will certainly develop some expectations even if there was no expectation in the prior purchase and this movement from no expectation to expectation indicates the difficulties in developing strategies that will continuously delight the guest (Berman, 2005). And since the prime aim of the organization is to delight the guest, they must endeavor to unravel and know what is in the mind of the customer to detect what could be their current expectations.

Berman (2005) argued that customers attitude changes over times as a result of new competitors, past expectations and new technologies, such as Web which provides 24/7 ordering capabilities and email access. These warrants change of service and product design at all time but this will delight customers only if it is meeting and exceeding what they expect, so, the need to detect their attitude, to avoid wrong conception and wrong perception between the service provider and the customer respectively.

Detection of customer's attitude is important to identify product requirement, "walk in your customers' shoes" (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998, p. 30). It could be lack of detection that made Matzler and Hinterhuber (1998, p. 25) , to assert that product development has failed and has led to the introduction of products that do not meet the needs of customers most of the time, despite all the efforts puts in by the firm. More to these some researcher add that, managers may cause customers to defect by providing wrong services to wrong customers if they can't detect their attitude.

For companies to increase their returns and excel, they must be able to define it customers, target the right customers and provide the right service that completely meet their needs (Jones & Sasser, 1995, p. 90). Detecting customers' attitude protects a firm

and is advantageous to the firm as Jones and Sasser, (1995) further said that companies often attract wrong customers, but detecting customer's attitude can provide the firm an adequate process for turning around the write customers when they have bad experience.

Moreover, changes over time as a result of new competitors, past experiences that can change customers' expectations Berman (2005), held that satisfaction is based on perception while delight is based on emotions, hence, this difference between emotion and perception can be gotten only by using some detective methods. More so, Detective method should be enforced by firms in order to retain their customers. The costs of attracting new customers are much higher than the cost of keeping the present ones (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998). Thus, organization shouldn't afford to lose customers, all measures should be put in place that will enable the organization to meet and exceed customer's needs. Organizations do not need to simply satisfy customers by meeting their expectation, but they need to delight them by exceeding their expectation (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998, p. 27).

Finally, identifying customer needs is a prior reason for detecting customer's attitude and attitude change. According to Chauda, Jain, Singh, & Mishra, (2011), identifying customer needs and transforming them into product design is very important to remain competitive in the market. Need to detect and know the requirements and attitude change because usually, the attractive requirements of services or product are not mentioned by the customer because he/she does not expect these features. Thus, the organization gets to know what may be a surprise to a particular guest and this will be very useful increasing delight for different customers.

There are several ways of detecting customer's attitude change. Firstly, voice to voice encounter can be important because the telephone is frequently the initial contact medium for the customer. Moreover, Service encounter with telephone based customer service representative are often moments of truth that influence customers' perception of the firm. (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015, p. 114)

Capturing the voice of the customer will enable the organization detect their attitude and know their expectations. Voice of customer is a component of quality (Griffin &

Hauser, 1993). The voice of the customer identifies the dimension of the customer value. The task of capturing the voice of the customer is to identify their needs, structure the needs and provide priorities for the customer's needs and wants and, it is so important that these customer's needs be stated in the customer's own mouth rather than the company's jargon (Griffin & Hauser, 1993). On a similar note, some writer added that capturing the voice of customer is a way of identifying a customer's need and transforming it into product or service design Chauda et al., (2011). This is vital to sustain the firm in the competitive market. The voice of customers can be captured in several ways.

Customer's interviews are useful for registering visible products requirements and customer problems (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998). These scholars added that interviews are more important in capturing the voice of the customers, detecting their attitude and knowing their needs because the product requirement expressed by the customer is considered as the tip of an iceberg, therefore, it is important to discover the "hidden" desires and challenges by interviewing them and asking follow up questions. Moreover, oral interview enables the interviewer to experience the customer's experience (Griffin & Hauser, 1993). This is so because the interviewer asks for details and gets a vivid description of an experience that will lead to better analysis and strategy. Especially considering the fact that the customers themselves do not know what they really expect and what, may be a surprise to them; According to Griffin and Hauser, (1993), it will be much better therefore to infer customers' needs from experimental interviews or observation.

Noticeably, focus group is another major way to of detecting customer's attitude. So as to detect the wants and needs, some market research institutes have used focus groups interview to predict product requirements, with the presumption that group dynamic effect permits a significant number of more diversified customers' desires to be unraveled (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998, p. 30). Identifying customers' needs and transforming it into product designing is very important to remain competitive in the market; hence, there is need to study and develop procedures that can help a company or project team to gain knowledge of customer's requirement and satisfaction and developing the product with innovative features (Chauda et al., 2011).

Furthermore, managers need a practical step by step tools and methods for example the Kano model analysis which will ensure a better understanding of customers' needs and requirements , as well as procedures and processes to enhance communication by focusing on the voice of the customer within a product development project Matzler and Hinterhuber (1998).

Matzler and Hinterhuber (1998) further presumed that analyzing customer's problems instead of their desires is a perfect way to detect the customer's attitude. They asserted that when the clients are asked just about their desires and purchasing reasons, in the existing exploratory phase, the results will be disappointing and the answer will be known already, thus they recommended a detailed analysis of the problem to be solved and held that this process may lead to unravel instructive information promising to product development (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998, p. 130).

On a similar line, data collection and getting feedbacks from customers is an excellent way to detect the customers' attitude, and unravel their requirements and their needs. According to some researchers, data protection, integrated social information orientation, and personalization orientation, Marketing strategies, including more superior and convenient visual and hearing orientations, more attentive and humanized online service, security for personnel, are all tools to reckon with when trying to combine feed backs from clients (Shyu, Chang, & Ko, 2013). For example, through feedbacks the organization will be able to detect the kind of music that some particular type of customers or focus groups likes in the Spa treatment room.

Finally, another and most important step to detect the customers attitude is to construct the Kano questionnaire, in other to detect the different attribute from the mind of the customers, about the product. The Kano questionnaire will enable you to know the Must- be, one dimensional, the attractive requirements and the features towards which the customer is indifferent (Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998, pp. 131–132). And when formulating the Kano questionnaire it is worth not forgetting that the voice of the customer is of great importance (Griffin & Hauser, 1993).

In conclusion, service organizations like spa hotel industries are striving to delight their customers and gain competitive edge in the market, but for them to achieve this, they

must be able to adapt to changes in demands and expectations from their customers. To curb with this, they must develop ways to detect the attitude of the customers to avoid service failure. And more so, detecting the attitude of their customers and developing ways to do so will enable the managers to know the desires of their customers so as to provide services that will exceed the needs of the customers and create delight.

## **2. STUDY AMONGST SPA HOTEL MANAGERS, STAFF AND CUSTOMERS**

### **2.1. Description of Estonian Spa hotels**

Estonia spa hotel has experience influx of international tourists especially from Russia, Finland, Sweden, Latvia and even from other parts of northern and Western Europe. Hotels can apply quality stars issued by Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association.

Estonian spa association governs spas and spa hotels in Estonia, this Association of Estonian spa sets some criteria for the spas and spa Hotels, hence, spa hotels and spas here are expected to operate on certain standards. Estonian hotel spas and spas, can be proud of beautiful sandy beaches, like the Pärnu beach that has attracted so much tourist from other parts of western Europe, highly rated hotels and spas, with well-known mud therapy arenas and water parks have been attracting and bringing thousands of tourists for decades to Estonia (Estonian Spa Association, n.d.), Estonia's spa traditions date back hundreds of years, the emphases in Estonian spas is the spa culture. The existence of the local mud, famed for its therapeutic qualities, is one of the fundamental reasons for the emergence of resorts in Estonia, which continues to be used today. Information gotten from the website of the Estonian spas association revealed that, Pärnu, Kuressaare and, Haapsalu, have been fashionable resorts since the 1820s, while Värskä, Kubija, Pühajärve, Narva-Jõesuu, Viimsi, Toila, and certainly, Tallinn also boast of excellent spas (Estonian Spa Association, n.d.).

It's worth noting that Estonian Hotel spas uses the same rating criteria like hotel stars union; The Estonian spa Association distinguishes medical and wellness spas; medical spas offer licensed out-patient cure, whereas wellness spas offer relaxing spa services and disease prevention; What was considered as "luxury pampering" has become an

applauded and well accepted approach to health which has stemmed up a decisive perceptual shift in what a “spa” is, to become “a far more mainstream, crucial and widely attractive concept where prevention and stress-reduction emerge.

The EU and those countries wishing to join are the Estonian spa Association (ESPA) seeks to work together on matters of common interest. This requires a greater co-operation of the national and regional associations as well as the private sector in the field of spas and balneology. The European Spa Association's objective is to promote spas and balneology in Europe and to take care that the natural remedies based on mineral water, landscape and climate will be available to as great number of citizens and visitors as possible. The Estonian Spa association is a part of this and it is made up of 19 members. Also there is Estonian Hotel and Restaurant association, over the European hotel star system; Hotel star union came to force in Estonia on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2011; and the hotel star union goal is to create European star system, to make it easier for customers to understand and find expected quality hotel (Estonian hotel and Restaurant, n.d). Most people travel and spend time in spas and spa hotels for health tourism purpose (Smith & Puczko, 2015). The popularity of spas in Estonia is a reflection of the developments in Estonia's health tourism (Estonian Spa Association, n.d). 2008 saw the completion of a medical spa hotel quality system, and the first therapeutic spas underwent accreditation; the system was designed to inform clients of the range of services available and of the nature of these services (Estonian Spa Association, n.d). The fact that the services could meet the requirements of the system – and the extent to which they met them is a sign of quality that clients could be guided in visiting Estonia's spas.

So far, 4-star medical spa status has been granted to Tallinn Viimsi Spa hotel (near Tallinn), while 3-starstatus has been granted to Toila Spa Hotel in Toila, Tervis Medical Spa in Pärnu, the Viiking Spa Hotel and Estonia Medical Spa Hotel in Pärnu, and Spa Hotel Laine in Haapsalu and Värskä Spa Hotel & Water Park in Värskä (Estonian Spa Association, n.d). Spa hotel packages usually include accommodation, swimming pool, sauna and sometimes breakfast.

To sum up, the Estonian hotel spas being an integral part of Estonian spa Association provides accommodation, treatments and many other amenities that has seen guest from

other cultures coming in to enjoy the rich Estonian culture in spas, the sandy beaches and mud therapy in Estonia has much to reckon with as far as Estonian spa culture is concern.

## **2.2. Research methodology**

Research is a process of trying to gain better understanding of the complexity of human experience (Marchall & Rossman, 2014, p. 21). This study is using qualitative research method, which provides opportunities for exploring possible social variables and set manageable boundaries (Holliday, 2016, p. 6). The vitality of qualitative research especially in fields that data has not been collected cannot be over emphasized.

Qualitative method has been used to carry out interviews as it is generally agree that the qualitative interview is more suitable for the Kano questionnaire; Experience has shown that the standardized oral interviews are the most suitable for Kano surveys and research using the Kano model Matzler et al, (1998, p. 132). More so, Kano model classification of requirement is qualitative in nature and has little or no use in quantitative evaluation (Mkpojiogu & Hashim, 2016).

The researcher anticipated visiting at least 10 spa hotels in Pärnu and Tallinn. Therefore, ten establishments had been visited, and nine granted audience to the interviewer, four of these spas are in Pärnu and five in Tallinn. Some establishments were visited abruptly without an appointment, and the managers were kind enough to grant the interview. On the other hand, some of those who were demanded appointments took a very long time to give feedback. Some gave feedbacks quite on time, and the interview was conducted. One hotel in Tallinn asked that the questions should be sent to them by email and they will answer the questions by email, but they did not send any reply to the questions.

Again, some gave appointed date for the interview, but their programs changed and couldn't fulfill the promise. So while some abrupt visitations worked, some planned visitations were not successful. And while some respondents were open and free to speak, there was a case where the respondent was so skeptical and wasn't willing to



open up. During the interview, people were allowed to speak freely about themselves and about the questions asked. This was in conformity with Magnusson & Marecek, (2015), who stated that one of the instruments to use in conducting qualitative research is allowing the respondent to talk more about themselves, give the opinions and explain their points of views (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, p. 25). Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry, it focuses and reveals the inside views of the people involved; being a social inquiry focuses on the way people make sense of the experiences and the world in which they live (Halloway & Galvin, 2016, p. 3).

For this empirical study, the years of work experiences were taken into consideration by the interviewer, for the managers and staffs to be interviewed. However, age and gender were not taken into consideration because the interviewer was looking for those who are knowledgeable in Spa businesses, despite their ages and gender. Those knowledgeable in the Spa business was the major criteria set, as criteria need to be set for selecting participants (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbin, 2015).

Open-ended questions were asked where the respondent spoke from their years of work experiences. In qualitative research, the open-ended question are used to gather information (Lewis, 2015, p. 473), which researchers aim to develop new understandings of human lived experience, relying on first-person accounts generally obtained through participant interviews (Gentles et al., 2015, p. 1773).

Managers, customers, therapist and other staffs had been interviewed and recorded. During the first round of the data collection, only managers and staffs were interviewed and the second round was basically for customers of the spa hotels who were interviewed at random in different spas. Participants' involved male and females including old, adolescents and youths. Some few staffs, for example, were also

Some few interviews were not recorded because the customers were in haste, couldn't wait for the interviewer to turn on the recorder. Thus, the interviewer had to talk fast with the customer, and wrote some notes immediately after the interview. The interviewer made sure that the phone was well charged and that the voice recorder of the phone was working quite well before going out for the interview. Respondents were asked the permission to record; some accepted while some were initially not

comfortable, they were skeptical that their answers to the questions might not be the right answer and so should not have been recorded. But the interviewer, however, was able to convince them that all answers are correct as far as it's knowledge about the Spa business. The interviewer also noticed that few respondents were not so free to talk when being recorded.

During the empirical study, a question was asked to understand the manager's perspectives of customer's delight in comparison with the theoretical connotations of delight. Also, the customer's attitude and expectation stated in the theoretical part of the thesis had to be studied practically.

For the interview amongst customers, the management in some of the Spas were informed that the interviewer would be coming to talk with some customers. In one Spa the management told the interviewer that sixteen customers had been booked for the day. So it was agreed that the interviewer would meet some of them at the reception and when they are living the treatment rooms. To some other spas, the interviewer just visited and discussed with the management and the customers were interviewed when they were collecting their bathrobes about to go for treatment and interview was also conducted when they came out of the treatment rooms.

One challenge to meet spa customers was that most of them only came out of their hotel rooms just a few minutes before treatment begins and after treatment, most of them are usually in a rush to go back to their hotel rooms. As a result, some gave just 4 minutes for the interview, and some were just two minutes, they talked a little and started rushing to their rooms. Regular hotel customers were much more patient and could speak longer at the receptionist during check out.

The interviewer gave an eye to eye contact and a natural smile to the customers, which was also influential to their facial expressions to be positive and this enabled a good and friendly atmosphere for discussion with most of the customers.

The author of the thesis formulated some questions based on the goal of the thesis, the research question, and the Kano model modalities. At least nine Spa managers including staffs and 20 customers were interviewed during the months of November and

December 2018, and result analyzed. Examples of interview questions to managers, staffs, and customers can be found in appendixes.

## **2.3 Data Collection and results**

The purpose of the empirical research is to support the goal of the thesis and to provide practical evidence to the theoretical literature, and this was to be achieved by conducting an oral interview with managers, staffs, and customers.

The interviewer made 24 audio recordings of managers, staffs, and customers. Coding was made to identify the various spas. The coding was made as Spa 1, Spa 2, Spa 3, spa, 4, Spa 5, Spa 6. Spa 7, Spa 8, Spa 9.

The first part of the question was about customer's delight; the interviewer sought to know the level of managers' awareness about customers delight, and how they change delighting tools to match and exceed customers' expectations. It was surprising that all the managers and staffs that had been interviewed said that customers' delight was new to them, For example, spa3 said: "I have no idea about customer delight." But in the course of the interview, the interviewer realized that from time to time most of them implement delight strategies, even though ignorant of the act.

In the course of the interview and conversation, two managers who initially mentioned that they were not familiar with the term delight mentioned the word in passing as they were talking. This implies that in the business world, they have heard the term, and they use it without knowing what it actually means, as they told the interviewer, who explained to them about the theoretical connotation of delight. For example, spa 6 said, "if someone comes or our organization agrees that we should make a delight for the guest, we sometimes create their names on their bathrobes, and we also use other items, i.e. other delighting tools, from time to time."

Managers think it is cumbersome to make it an obligation to constantly create delight by changing delighting tools. Spa 1 said for example that they sometimes create surprises to delight customer, but this only happens occasionally and it is not a promise. Also, Spa3 said, "we are a medical spa, and we do not need to create any surprise to delight

customer; we have packages which they buy, and when they come, that's what they get."

Spa 1, stated:

We do surprise customers sometimes, but we do not think it's something traditional or systematic, we do not consider it as something that we must do, because it is quite difficult to create new surprises all the time consistently. We do it on special occasions like clients birthdays and other big celebrations for example, on Estonian Independent day, in such cases, we may also provide some candies for the guest, and they can eat buffet in the restaurant. Sometimes, we can give all guest cakes during lunchtime.

According to Spa 3, "we have 500 customers, and we do not have time to be creating surprises and changing delighting tools all the time. It is difficult; she said, "only small spas could have time to be creating such surprises because, for us, different sets of customers visit our spa every week."

Generally, managers from time to time make some surprise services to delight their guest. Sometimes they give cakes, candies, expensive wines, spa 6 talked of providing a bathrobe in the room of loyal guest with their names on it, especially if the guest is visiting for the 50th time. And another delighting tool which they give from time to time includes; an expensive bottle of Champaign or a surprise ticket to show.

Spa 1 added that customers as well give surprises to the organization on some festive days to also acknowledge good services that had been offered to them, this also enables the organization to know that their customers are satisfied and delighted because only satisfied people could endeavor to give back to the Spa management.

The next part of the interview was to know whether managers understand when products or service quality change value in the minds of the customers and how often they change tools to satisfy and delight customers. Most of them confessed that it was not easy at all to constantly switch delighting tools.

Spa 4 noted that they do not need to change too many tools because they have a standard and they want to keep a particular standard. This receptionist manager assumes

that the surprise factor cannot be created or should not be created all the time because the world will not have space or there may be nothing to expect in the future, and nothing else will be left to do if we rely on creating surprises every day.

Spa 5 mentioned that they always ask open questions to the customers to know their needs and know their minds, and this is done before and after the treatment. According to them, knowing the minds of customers is based on what the customers listed as their expectations before visiting the hotel. In some and most Spas, especially medical spa, they generalize the expectations. Spa 4, however, acknowledges that the receptionist should be able to talk with every guest to know their needs which might be different in some cases.

Managers know that customers have expectations, but they however usually generalize, that is to say, all the clients coming to the establishment have the same expectations.

For example, Spa1 said;

Customers who are coming to our spa know why they are coming so that there is no false expectation. When somebody wants to go to a spa, there is always an expectation. For example, we are a medical spa, and the biggest of our customer group are older people who do not visit for wellness hotel services, they are coming to get medical treatments and different kind of services. Customers already know what we offer, so we do not expect their expectation to be different". She added that, "the customers are usually satisfied, and as a result revisit at least 4-5 times a year and leave in the hotel for at least 1 week each time they visit, and these are the ones that are considered as the loyal customers in our case because we do not really deal with a very big group.

The manager of Spa1, however, acknowledges that even though the expectations of customers were all the same, newcomers sometimes have different expectations and she added that it becomes tricky in such cases to know their expectation and deliver satisfactory services to them.

We know that expectations sometimes are changing and it is good to change tools, but we can't change things all the time, so it makes it difficult and disappointing at

times. But we are a medical spa, who offer treatment and it may not be necessary to keep changing tools.

Spa 3, noted that customers, buy their packages, and is considered that is what their expectation is. In some cases, they see the doctor who gives the prescription for the treatment that the customer should receive.

According to Spa1, the customer base now will be different in the next ten years as was different in the past ten years. In the next 10 years, the set of old people will be different and it is necessary to consider the change and change tools, because the next generation of older people would definitely need more comfort, much more sophisticated things, and much more luxury than that of the past 10 years who were not so exposed to the technological advancement. Thus in the long term strategic plans, managers must be able to forecast this view.

Still, on the expectations of the customer, Spa 2 explained that all their customers have the same expectations. According to her, all customers visit their spa for relaxation purposes. She, however, said that sometimes after offering a treatment the customer may end up dissatisfied because the customer may have preferred a stronger or sports massage different from what he or she receives. And the customer may become annoyed when he is not satisfied because he/she thinks he didn't get what he expected. Therefore the perceived value in such case is dissatisfactory, and in this case, thus, it can be said that the customer's expectation does not match the perception (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990).

According to spa 3, customers' dissatisfaction in their spa may occur when after a treatment they realize from feedback that the customer does not like the therapist with whom he or she was having treatment. In such a case, therefore, the customer must have gone through 50 minutes of torture because he or she didn't like the therapist. But she, however, adds that such a problem may only be solved by changing the therapist during the next visit of the customer, if and only if the customer comes back, because that particular 50 minute is gone, and nothing can be done again about that.

Most managers explained that they measure the customers' satisfaction from the feedback they get from the customers. These feeds backs are gotten from online comments and sometimes the customer talks with the spa therapist or receptionist before leaving the spa. Through this, they get to know the worries of the customers, what they enjoyed, what satisfied them and the areas where they were not pleased. They get customers satisfaction through different journals, those who have gone through different booking system, Spa 1 said:

So they give feedbacks to the booking system or our hotels, through the feedback sheets. Also, we have customers who are coming in groups, and the group organizers give us feedbacks. This is important both to us and the group organizers because they can't organize a group if the customers are not satisfied. And all this are working together.

Sometimes there are negative feedbacks, but of course, this are things that we learn from, sometimes we try to fix their problems if we can, but if we cannot, we just apologies in some cases. If a customer is, for example, expecting that we may be offering one service or the other which we do not offer, we apologize that here we don't offer that.

According to spa 4, "we notice that customers' expectations are very high, but we try to go a little more than their expectation." She adds that "this usually happens when the clients have like birthdays, we always surprise them by putting something in their rooms, and they usually have the wow! The effect, when they enter the room. So we can exceed their expectation because they tell us what they need before coming. We put some card notes in their rooms".

Spa 6 manager said that:

Most often we know customers' expectations because they tell us ahead of time what they need before visiting the hotel. They have a view of the room; some indicate the type of music that they may want so that we know before they arrive. While others may prefer loud music, some prefer quiet room others prefer relaxing music even in the spa. Also, if a customer is visiting us for the 50th time, we may give them a surprise by writing their names on their bathrobe, and we change tools sometimes we may give them a surprise ticket to watch a show in the city.

The next part of the questions was asked based on the Kano modalities of attribute and according to the respondent of spa 2:

Most customers are satisfied in our spa after treatment, but one thing that usually causes dissatisfaction to our customers and makes them annoyed is the fact that we do not have a toilet downstairs in the spa. They expected it as something that must be there. Rather, the toilet is upstairs, this we know dissatisfies the customer and we shall change it with time. Also, another thing that dissatisfies customers sometimes can be the sound of music in the treatment room; sometimes we might be happy with the sound that we put thinking that it satisfies everyone, but some customers will want it changed, and others may not want any sound at all. They may want the place to be very quiet and relaxing. Sometimes, noise from outside to the treatment room makes the customer unhappy and dissatisfied.

In sum, the empirical study shows that managers assume that the customers' demands such as the rooms, they asked for before visiting the spa, the package they booked for, are their expectations. And customers may sometimes end up dissatisfied if the package bought is poorly delivered to them or if they did not like the therapist who did the treatment to them. It could also be that the massage was not done in the way that the customer expected; he might have expected a hard massage while he perceived a soft or light one.

The interviewer got a slightly different response from customers concerning expectation as compared to what the managers considered as the expectations of the customers. Managers of medical spa said all customers come for medical purposes and managers of wellness believed that all customers come for relaxation. But it was realized that some customers hadn't any expectations, and some, even those that had been to a spa before said that they didn't know what to expect.

As earlier said, the interview revealed that most of the customers who visit the Spa for the first time do not have expectations, for example, a husband and wife 43 and 40 respectively said they were visiting that spa for their first time but had no major expectations, and they were fully satisfied by all the services and facilities. Many others equally said they didn't have expectations. some especially the younger ones 17–23 years, just go to the spa for excitement, coincidentally most of them of this age range



that were interviewed said that they were not expecting anything, but they were totally satisfied, excited to visit the spa again. For example, two girls of this age range made this comment:

“We are here for the first time; we never expected anything because we did not know what to expect, but each of us had 50 minutes massage, and we really enjoyed it. It was a very good experience and we shall come again next time”, thus, they will return to the service provider.

Most regular spa customers interviewed ranged from 24 to 52 years, and most of them said they visited for relaxation purposes because their previous experiences in the spa had been good so far, so they have to keep going to keep enjoying.

Also some regular customers in the spa especially couples said their expectations were very high, but they really couldn't outline the high expectations. Someone said. “I have been here before, but I don't know what to expect.”

Some customers said they had some few new things which surprised them and they were excited by those things. While others said that they found everything normal as usual, but they were fully satisfied, it was found out that different things excited different people, while a water pipe newly constructed in one of the spas excited most guests, in another Spa surprisingly; one lady said she was excited by the quantity of food.

Majority of the customers visited in all the spas, both in Pärnu and Tallinn said that they were very satisfied with the services and facilities provided. In a nutshell, 90% of the customers interviewed in all the spas visited said they were fully satisfied.

However, some few customers gave some negative comments and some complaints, for example, it was surprising that a customer considered water is playing and swimming as things for kids. According to her (45 years old), “everything was good, the staffs were friendly, environment good, but I consider swimming as something for kids.”

Moreover knowing that spa is for Wellness, one young boy surprisingly said that there was no smoking area in the spa and they could not also smoke in their rooms, so they

had to go out to do that, which was not so comfortable for them. But they held however that they know that it is normal not to smoke in the spa and in the hotel room. But they wished consideration could be made for a change.

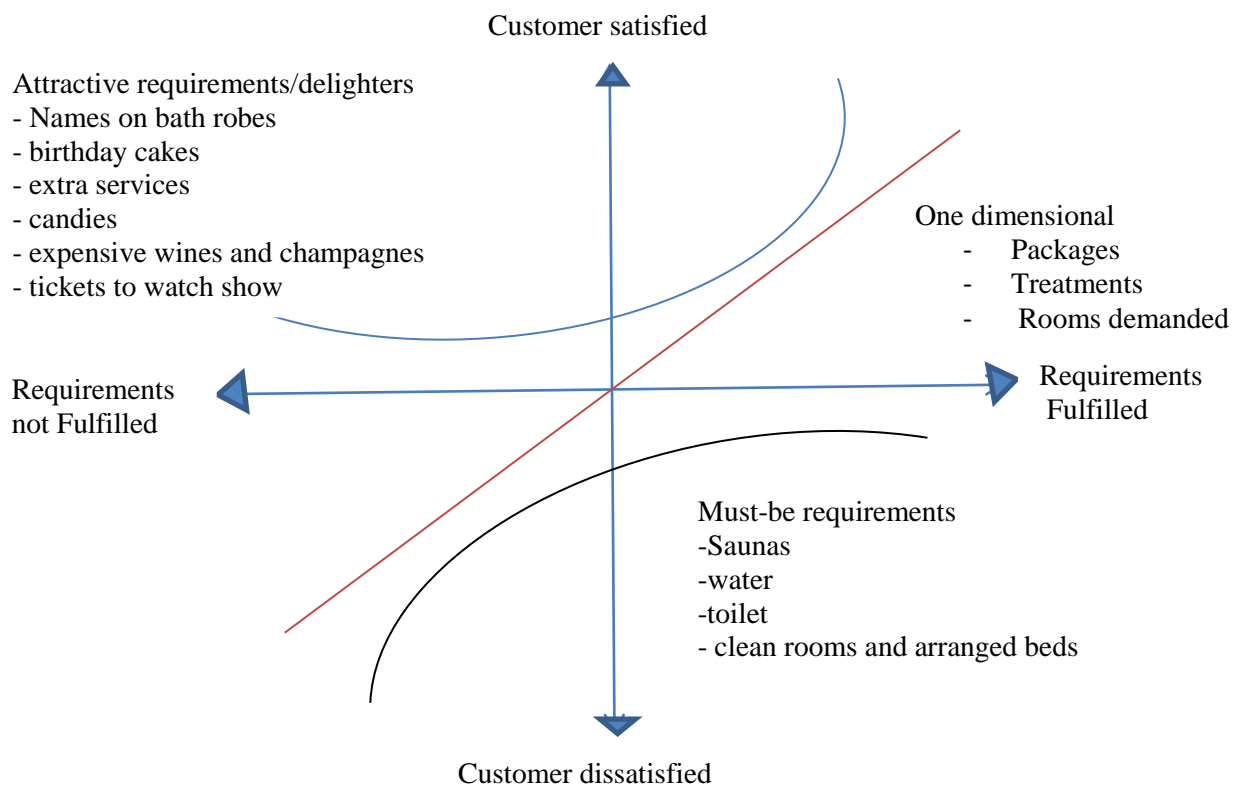
When customers were asked what is basic in a spa, the majority of them said sauna. They said different kinds of saunas, most customers considered sauna as most important for a spa, for example, according to a customer, sauna is the most important thing in a spa, and it is what makes a spa to be a spa. In his word, “a lot of different saunas attract me to visit a spa, the more the variety of saunas, and the better.”

While others think that water is a basic attribute for a spa, for example, according to a customer, the most important thing in a spa is water. She said, “I would not think of going to a spa without water, and I do not think that it can function without water.”

Most customers asserted that one thing that can really make them dissatisfied is if a package was not well delivered to them. It was revealed that customers will always be fully satisfied if their package is well delivered and dissatisfied and aggravated if a package is not well delivered. Some customers said that if their packages are not well delivered, they will make negative comments on the Medias like they will write a negative review on trip advisor, booking.com, while others said that they will be disappointed but will not say anything and will just go and never come back again to that spa.

It was also revealed that customers get so aggravated if they are being delayed. For example, one therapist said, “If the customers arrive and I have to complete some arrangements maybe 15 minutes into the time that the treatment was to start, the customers get so annoyed”. It also revealed that too many light in a room could be a negative, especially to male customers while female customers seems not to have problem with that.

In conclusion, not all customers visit Spas with defined expectations. While some knows what they will expect to the outcome of the services which they will receive, others just go to relax away from home and others just go for fun and excitement no defined expectation, which makes it easier for the management at the end because any little effort made ends up being exciting to the first time customers who are usually without expectations. While those with expectations are usually satisfied if their packages are well delivered and very dissatisfied if the package is not well delivered. And the empirical study has so far revealed that must-be attributes include Sauna, and water with some few other things, while excitors are extra series, surprise birthday cakes, names on bathrobes and some expensive wines. The figure 2 shows a summary diagram of this empirical study based on Kano analysis.



**Figure 2.** Kano diagram, empirical study, composed by thesis author adopted from Matzler, Hans, Bailom, & Sauerwein, 1996, p. 2

As revealed by this empirical field work in Estonian hotel spas, the diagram implies that Must-be there is no reaction from customers if these attributes, that is sauna, water,

toilet are there, it doesn't affect customers satisfaction; but if these attributes are not there, it will result to total dissatisfaction and outrage. Also when the packages and treatments bought by the customers are well delivered to them, they are satisfied but they are very dissatisfied if the package they bought or the room they demanded for is not well delivered. Also the attractive requirements are not being demanded by the customers but if they, are provided with such surprises like their names on the bathrobe in their rooms, surprise cakes on their birthdays and expensive wine and Champaign's as surprise dinners, and a surprise ticket to go watch a show they feel so excited and delightful.

## **2.4. Discussion and Recommendation**

The empirical study has revealed that managers are not familiar with the word delight, but they do implement the act of delighting customers from time to time. Although the delighting incident occurs without the managers knowing what act they are implementing, the result has been successful. Most of the respondents said they understand customer satisfaction but not customers delight. However, the interviewer made them understand that delight was an extension of satisfaction and surprise as Oliver (1980), stipulated.

Customer's satisfaction and customers delight seem to confusing and contradictory in some cases. Especially if considering the fact that different writers gave different definitions as to what satisfaction is and what delight stands for. Parasuraman et al., (1985) consider satisfaction to be a match between expectations and perceptions. Most managers in this empirical study said that satisfaction is when a customer is happy. Some said delight as well occurs when a customer is very happy. It is recommended for managers to know the differences between satisfaction and delight. The literature review of this master's thesis brought out some differences between customers satisfaction and customers delight. For example, Berman (2005) held that satisfaction is based on perception and delight is based on emotions. Some writers such as Schneider and Bowen (1999) believed that when customers are satisfied, they can just be fine, but when they are delighted, they will be super great and this will lead to an unsolicited advocacy, i.e., they will deliver positive word of mouth that will bring more client,

profitable to the firm. Thus, they advocated that managers, should go beyond merely satisfying customers, but strive to create delight.

However creating delight by constantly changing delighting tools resulted to be somehow challenging to managers, as most of them asserted that they do change delighting tools from time to time but not so often. They assumed that it is not possible to do it all the time; therefore it is not an obligation for them. This is clearly in line with some writers of customers delight, for example, Kumar et al., (2001), postulated that the act of delight by constantly creating surprise to customers is not applicable and therefore it's forbidden. Some managers assume that their customer's base was too big and it was not possible to constantly create surprises for customers. Rust & Oliver (2000) argued that delighting the customer raises the bar too high making it difficult for the delighting firm in the next purchase circle. However, many writers have agreed that the act of delight shape the customer's attitude positively and create customers' loyalty profitable for the firm.

The empirical study also revealed that managers most often generalize customer's expectation. They do not consider the fact that different people may have different expectations. The entire wellness establishment assumes that all the customers come for relaxation and nothing else and medical establishment assumes that all clients know what they offer, and so they visit the establishment just for that, which is to get some treatment. However, some authors of the articles read for this thesis asserted that considerations as to what customers expect should be handled differently by managers. For example, Tsai et al., (2012) and Torres et al., (2014 a) assumes that male and female customers are satisfied and delighted by different aspects of the spas. These scholars assumes that while aspects like friendliness delight female guest, aspects like efficiency and timelines will delight male guest. Thus rather than generalizing customers' expectations, managers of hotel spas should consider these details for better service delivery and customers delight.

Furthermore, it is recommended that managers should implement one to one interview or discussion at the reception with all guests who visit the establishment. This will enable them to discover that some customers who visit the Spa do not even have expectations; some do not even know what to expect. Griffin & Hauser (1993) asserted

that the voice of each customer should be captured; they stated that the voice of customer is a component of quality. The voice of the customer identifies the dimension of the customer value. The task of capturing the voice of the customer is to identify their needs, structure the needs and provide priorities. Thus if managers keep on keep generalizing, then, there will be a gap between customers perception and service delivery. If they talk to the customers and detect their attitude, that is to know their minds before providing the service, they will know which service will be best or suitable to the guests.

The empirical study revealed that most regular customers who had been visiting the spas for some time said that they enjoyed their previous experiences therefore the reason they were coming to the spa again to get similar experiences. And it was realized that more than 90% of the customers interviewed in most of the spa said that they were fully satisfied by the hotel spa services, in line with Oliver (1980), who stated that satisfaction experience influences repurchase intentions.

Liljander et al., (1995) argued that the media has a great role on customer's attitude. According to these writers, customers believe in the reviews of other customers experiences, than the adverts of the firm. In conformity with that, managers held that some customers sometimes have funny attitudes; they said some customers are friendly but some are not. According to managers, some customers are funny in the sense that at any instance, they threaten to write a negative comment on the media. Some demand for something or if there is a simple mistake, they threaten that they will write negative feedback on trip advisor. This is to say nowadays, the media has a great influence on customer's attitude in hotel spas. Therefore, it is highly recommended that further research be carried to examine the extent to which the media has affected the attitude of Hotel Spa customers.

Also the analysis shows that the Kano model attributes which ranges from must/be requirements, one dimensional requirement are the most considered by spa managers. They ensure to provide the basics, and the tools that will satisfy the customers and occasionally create delighters. While other attributes like reverse and indifferent attributes are left out in most cases. It is a good strategy that the managers all ensures

that the must-be attributes are all present in the spa. However the aspect of delighting customers should be of great concern to the managers.

Note should be taken of the fact that basic requirements which are considered as the must-be attributes/requirement of the Kano model, these are essential items that should be fulfilled for the business to even start. Must-be attributes does not satisfy the customer when they are there, but customers will be very dissatisfied if this attribute is not there. For example, water, saunas, clean treatment rooms with beds, toilets in the spa. In the case of this empirical study for example, it was realized that clients complained of a spa that hadn't toilet in the spa area which was down stairs, instead, the toilet was upstairs.

One dimensional requirements are those qualities that when they are fulfilled, the customer is satisfied but when they are not fulfilled the customer is dissatisfied. For example this empirical study shows that packages are one dimensional. If the packages, bought by the client are well delivered, the customer is satisfied, if the package delivered to the customer is not what the customer requires or expected, the customer is so dissatisfied. like was the case studied here in spa 2 where a customer was not satisfy with a massage he said he needed a stronger massage than the one he received. And also a case in spa 3 where the customer was not pleased with the treatment because he didn't like the masseur who carried out the treatment on her , and thus, the result was dissatisfactory for her.

However, this study shows that indifferent attributes where not so visible in the spas. Indifferent attributes are those attributes that whether present or not, does not affect the satisfaction level of customers and it is sometimes considered as a waste of resources.

Customer delight has been applauded by some writers and managers, while others think that it is not necessary, thus, the act of delighting customers is considered a mixed blessing. In this case, therefore, it is recommended for more studies to be carried out, to find out the extent to which delight is a mixed blessing.

## CONCLUSION

The master's thesis overviewed hotel Spa businesses, and the empirical study has been carried out in nine Establishments in Estonia, five hotel Spas in Tallinn and four hotel Spas in Pärnu. The results showed that 90% of guest who visits the spas have complete satisfaction, though some go without expectations, others visits the Spa with expectations which are usually met. The literature review of this master's thesis outlined numerous reasons and ways to detect customer's attitude before providing service to avoid the service gap. Moreover, the Kano model modalities were used to collect data, about customer's expectation and their level of satisfaction. The data was collected among managers, staffs, and customers of Estonian hotel Spas. Sauna and water are the most important aspects of a Spa and are considered as the must-be requirements. Spa treatments & packages are considered to be one dimensional quality. Extra service like surprise birthday cakes; names on bathrobes, expensive wines amongst others, are used as delighters in Spas.

The master's thesis reveals the need to understand customer attitude or to determine their expectations, which will enable the provision of required services that can satisfy and delight the customers. Results of findings, however, revealed that managers generalize customer's expectation believing that all customers who visit the spas have the same expectations which are relaxation in wellness establishments and medical purpose for medical spas. But, the results revealed that while some customers had expectations, others visit the spa with no expectations and newcomers to the spas confessed that they did not know what to expect. It is recommended that one to one conversation be done with all customers to differentiate their levels of expectations.



The empirical study sought to understand how managers change delighting tools to exceed customer's expectations and create delight. The research also, found out the extent to which managers are aware of customer delight.

Customer's delight is linked to the customer's emotions as revealed by the literature review and the empirical study of the master's thesis. Satisfaction can only be achieved when the customer's expectations are fully met, and delight surfaced when expectations are exceeded. The theoretical part of the thesis further revealed that customer's attitude changes over time, therefore, managers must be able to detect the attitude of customers to know what they expect for effective service designing and delivery. There should be ways of probing the customer's mind such as talking to the customers.

The extent to which customers may want to return to a service provider will depend on how the customer was satisfied by the previous experience of that service provider. Delightful incidences are rarely forgotten by the customers since it goes with emotions. Most customers who were interviewed in this empirical study said that their previous experience with the spa was good and so they returned to enjoy a similar experience. Repurchase intention is influenced by a positive experience of the customer, from a positive outcome of the service. The research also revealed that word of mouth becomes unsolicited advocacy for delighted customers, which is, of course, profitable for the Spa business.

The study found out that, though managers' are unfamiliar with the aspect of customer's delight they sometimes implement delighting act unconsciously, but do not think it should be an obligation or systematic in the spa. They think it should just be done once a while, especially on birthdays of loyal customer' and on other festive days, like the Estonian Independent day. Creating delighting incidents consistently, by constantly creating surprises is expensive and cumbersome. But Customers' delight is very important because it will create loyal customers who will purchase more and the delighting firm will profit.

It is recommended that more research on customers' delight should be undertaken. So that enough literature will be available which will help to educate managers and service business owners on customers delight and the need and strategies to delight customers;

which is very instrumental in shaping positive customer's attitude and ensuring loyal customers 'base profitable to the delighting firm.

The research has found out that the social media influences customers attitude. It is strongly recommended that further research be done to fine out the extent to which the social media has affected the attitudes of hotel spa customers.

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**Appendix 1.** Background information of respondents.

Names of Hotel Spas Visited and interviewed	Duration of interview in minutes approximated	Location in Estonia	Date of the interview	Code used	Position in Establishment (not including customer's interviewed)	Years of work experience	Number of employees
Estonian medical spa kreutwald Hotel, zen spa	52 40 15	Pärnu Tallinn	6/11/18 8&27/11/18, & 9/12/18 14/11/18 s	Spa 1 Spa 2	Manager Manager	5 13	120 4-5
Tervise medical spa	27	Pärnu	15/11/18	Spa 3	Staff	8	50
Hedon spa	59	Pärnu	15/11/18	Spa 4	Receptionist Manager	13	110 H & 5 S
Tervise Paradise	22.13	59	15/11 & 16/12/18	Spa 5	Receptionist	2	50
Hotel palce Schnelli	10	Tallinn Tallinn	27/11/18 27/11/18	Spa 6 Spa 7	Manager Manager	3 10	40 4
hotel day spa	7	Tallinn	16/12/18	Spa 8	Receptionist	1	4
Rocca al mare hotel spa	75	Parnu	16/12/18	Spa 9	Receptionist & Therapist	8	
Estonia resort & spa							

## **Appendix 2.** Interview questions to managers and staffs

1. Are you aware of delighters?
2. How do you create your delighters?
3. How often do you change tools?
4. Do you give the same attributes both loyal and new customers?
5. How do you arrange for service delivery and product design?
6. How do you target meeting and exceeding the needs of your customers?

Or what strategies do you put in place to identify the expectations and desires of your customers?

7. What strategies do you implement to make sure that you meet the needs of the customer and avoid dissatisfaction and disappointment from the part of the consumer
8. How do you make up if you fail to meet the particular need of a consumer?

Added and adjusted questions to managers and staffs included:

1. Do you have idea about customers delight?
2. Do you create delighters in your hotel?
3. What do you think are the expectations of the customers when they visit your hotel?
4. Are their expectations usually fully met?
5. Do you usually predict their expectations before providing services to them
6. Do you sometimes create surprises to your customers? If yes what and how?

7. Please discuss briefly with me what you know about customer's attitude.

Another set of questions were asked to managers bases on the classification of the Kano attributes.

1. What are the things that customers consider as basics, that is most important when they visit the spas?
2. What are some of the things that when it is there the customers feels very satisfied but when that thing is absent, they feel so dissatisfied?
3. What are some of the things that excite customers, that surprises them some times and make them happy?
4. What are some of the things that the spa management includes as extra to excite the customers but it seems normal to them?
5. Have managers ever tried to implement so much beauty or so much instrument which turns to yield negative result instead of positive? That is, it turns to irritate or displease the customer instead of pleasing them

### **Appendix 3. Questions to customers**

First phase: Questions to customers base on Kano classification of attributes.

1. What are some things as a customer you consider as basics when you visit the spas? That is something that must be there?
2. What are some of the things that when it is there you feel very satisfied but when that thing is absent, you feel so dissatisfied?
3. What are some of the thing that excite you as customers, and surprises you some times and keeps you happy after your spa visit?
4. Have you ever noticed something in the Spa that the management meant to excite you but you found it normal?
5. Have you ever experienced a case where the management tries to implement so much beauty or so much instrument which turns to irritate you instead?

This next set of questions to customers is based on Kano questionnaire. These questions are asked before treatment.

1. What are your expectations today
2. How do you feel when a package is well delivered to you

How do you feel when a package that you bought is not well delivered?

3. How do you feel when the environment is clean, quiet, calm and less populated?

How do you feel when the environment is not clean, noisy and overcrowded?

4. How do you feel when you happen to meet a therapist that you don't like?

How do you feel when you are being massaged or treated by a therapist that you like?

6. How do you feel when you meet staffs who are friendly and welcoming?

How do you feel when you meet unfriendly and un welcoming staffs.

7. Time

8. Toilet

9. Music

10. Shopping center around

11. Surprise birthday cake and other surprise services.

## RESÜMEE

### KÜLASTAJA ELAMUS: KÜLASTAJATE SUHTUMISE MÄÄRAMINE EESTI HOTELLI SPAADE NÄITEL

Mube Celerine Mendi

Kliendid külastavad spaad lõõgastumise eesmärgil ja raviotstarbeks. Rahulolu kogemus tekib siis, kui pakutav teenus vastab klientide ootustele või isegi ületab neid. Külastuselamuse saanud kliendid loovad lojaalse kliendi baasi, mis on ettevõttele kasulik.

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on analüüsida kliendi rahulolu Eesti hotelli spaades ning selle tulemusena pakutakse välja ideid uute teenuste kavandamiseks. Uurimisküsimused on: kuidas juhid arendavad teenuseid nii, et ületada klientide ootuseid ja luua elamust; kui teadlikud on juhid kliendi elamuse saavutamisest. Samuti tuleb teada, kas juhid määravad klientide ootusi teenuse kvaliteedi kohta. Kliendi külastuselamus on seotud kliendi emotsioonidega, mis ilmnes nii kirjanduse ülevaates kui ka magistritöö empiirilises uuringus. Rahulolu on võimalik saavutada ainult siis, kui kliendi ootused on täielikult täidetud ning elamus saavutatakse ootuste ületamisel.

Lisaks selgus magistritöö teoreetilisest osast, et kliendi suhtumine muutub aja jooksul, mistõttu peavad juhid suutma avastada klientide suhtumist, et nad teaksid, mida nad ootavad efektiivse teenuse kavandamisel. Kliendi suhtumist tuleb uurida, näiteks rääkida klientidega. See, mil määral klient soovib teenusepakkuja juurde naasta, sõltub sellest, milline oli kliendi varasem kogemus vastava teenuseosutaja juures. Kliendid unustavad harvaesinevaid juhtumeid, sest see käib emotsioonidega kaasas. Enamik selles empiirilises uuringus intervjueritud klientidest ütles, et nende varasem kogemus

spaaga oli hea ja nad naasid samasuguse kogemuse nautimiseks. Korduvat külastust mõjutab kliendi positiivne kogemus teenusest. Suusõnalisest turundamisest üksi ei piisa, kuigi ka see on vajalik spaa edasiarenguks.

Magistritöö tutvustas hotelli spaasid. Empiiriline uuring viidi läbi üheksas asutuses Eestis: viis spaahotelli Tallinnas ja neli hotelli spaad Pärnus. Tulemused näitasid, et 90% külastajatest, kes külastavad seda spaad, on täiesti rahul, kuigi mõned lähevad ilma ootusteta, teised külastavad spaad, kus ootused on tavaliselt täidetud. Selle magistritöö kirjanduslik ülevaade kirjeldas mitmeid põhjusi ja viise, kuidas tuvastada klientide suhtumist enne teenuse osutamist. Lisaks kasutati andmete kogumiseks, kliendi ootuste ja rahulolu määramiseks Kano mudelit. Intervjueeriti hotelli spaade juhte, töötajaid ja kliente. Kõige olulisemaks aspektiks peetakse sauna ja vett. Need on spaa kohustuslikud osad.

Uuring näitas, et kuigi juhid ei oska määrata kliendi elamust, siis mõnikord saavutatakse kliendi elamus alateadlikult. Nad arvavad, et seda tuleks lihtsalt teha üks kord, kui vajadus on vajalik, eriti püsikliendi sünnipäevadel ja teistel pidulikel päevadel. Meeldivate vahejuhtumite järjekindel loomine, eriti pidevate üllatuste loomise tõttu, on kallis ja tülikas, kuid kliendi rõõm selle üle on väga oluline, sest see tekitab lojaalseid kliente, kes ostavad rohkem ning lõpptulemusena saab ettevõtte kasu.

Arvestades asjaolu, et enamik juhte ei ole kliendi elamuse saavutamisest teadlik, on soovitatav teha rohkem uuringuid antud valdkonnas. See aitab omakorda teavitada teenindusettevõtete omanikke, kuidas kujundada kliendi suhtumist ja tagada lojaalsete klientide baasi.